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SUBJECT: USAID ADMINISTRATOR ANDREW S. NATSIOS VISIT
TO NIGERIA

[I](#). SUMMARY:

[1](#)1. (U) Mr. Andrew S. Natsios, Administrator, visited Abuja, Nigeria, from November 18-21, 2002. Mr. Natsios was accompanied by Ms. Kate Almquist, Special Assistant and Mr. Greg Loos, Education Team Leader, EGAT. The purpose of the Administrator's visit to Nigeria was to attend the Global Education For All Initiative (EFA) Second High-level Group Meeting, chaired by the UNESCO Director-General and hosted by President Olusegun Obasanjo. Mr. Natsios met the key government and political leadership of Nigeria, including President Obasanjo, National Security Advisor, the Minister of Education, Chairman of the Nigerian Action Committee on AIDS (NACA), Special Advisor on Budgetary Matters, Representatives of registered political parties, Representatives of selected unregistered political associations, declared and undeclared candidates contesting the upcoming elections, Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, and non-governmental organizations. He also met and briefed the press, visited the USAID Nigeria office to meet and address the staff, had talks over lunch with senior staff and dinner with USDH and USPSC employees prior to departure. We also managed to squeeze in a mini-tour of Abuja.

[1](#)2. (U) The original program included a visit to Kano, the largest city in northern Nigeria to view USAID activities in HIV/AIDS, Education, Democracy and Governance and Agriculture. However, this segment of his program was superceded by a request for the Administrator to meet with key Nigerian officials on elections related issues. In all of his meetings, the Administrator stressed: 1) the need for an all parties code of conduct denouncing electoral violence, 2) the importance and expectation of conducting free, fair, transparent and non-violent elections, 3) the 2003 elections represent a watershed, would set a precedent for Africa and would influence how the USG and other donors viewed Nigeria, Africa as a whole and initiatives such as NEPAD, 4) Nigeria would maintain a leadership role in Africa by a successful transition from one civilian government to another. He also voiced USG concern about election organizational problems (perception that INEC is inadequately prepared due to lack of funding and slow pace of logistical planning. Finally, he inquired about what assistance the USG could provide to enhance the credibility of the electoral process and ensure successful elections.

[1](#)3. (U) This was Administrator Natsios' first trip to Nigeria. Mr. Natsios' visit with the key political players was productive and his meetings elicited general support for a code of conduct, GON promise to adequately fund INEC, and a promise from INEC to reopen voter registration. Moreover, the visit underscored for some key actors Washington's interest in a fair, peaceful contest. He departed Abuja on November 21, 2002, as scheduled and without incident.

II. Education For All (EFA) High-Level Group Meeting

[1](#)4. (U) The EFA Second High-level Group Meeting was held at the Congress Hall of the Abuja NICON Hilton

hotel from November 19-21. The meeting was opened by President Olusegun Obasanjo and assisted by the Nigerian Minister of Education. Mr. Koichiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, delivered the welcome address and video-taped goodwill messages from James Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, and Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of UNICEF, were played. Participants at the meeting included Ministers of Education from Europe, Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East. United Nations organizations, the EU, World Bank and USAID made up the list of multilateral and bilateral organizations, as well as the participation of several international non-governmental organizations.

15. (U) The expected outcomes of the meeting were:

- a) to assess the progress toward the achievement of the Dakar goals including discussion on major issues deriving from the global EFA monitoring report;
- b) evaluate the extent to which national policies, plans and programs are on track;
- c) evaluate the extent to which international commitments made in Dakar are being met; and,
- d) mobilize global political support and resources for realizing EFA goals to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005.

16. (U) Administrator Natsios presented remarks during the session on International Commitments and Initiatives. He stated that there has been a 90% increase for education at USAID over the past 3 years (\$100 million to \$195 million) and a 25% increase for education in Africa. USAID will not invest in a country if: a) it is not democratic, b) it is itself not investing in education (as measured by the % of national budget going to ed), c) the money will be wasted (corruption), d) systems of quality control are not in place, and e) the country is only focused on inputs, not results. He also stated he was pleased that the U.S. has rejoined UNCESO, and supports the work UNESCO is doing in data collection and analysis. Finally, he emphasized the importance of partnerships with the private sector: religious (Mission Schools, Koranic Schools), business, foundations, (i.e. the Gates Foundation). In his final remarks, the Administrator informed the audience about the Global Development Alliance (GDA).

17. (U) In an informal one-on-one exchange with the Nigerian Minister of Education, Professor Abraham Babalola Borishade wanted to clarify that data reported on Nigeria is not always accurate, or reflects the whole picture. For example, the 7% figure quoted as budgeted for education from the national budget, does not take into consideration state and local government inputs which are substantial for primary education. The Minister also explained the FGN has other important priorities (i.e. provision of clean water, electricity and good road, thus it could not devote more to education). The Minister stressed that Nigeria has made progress in the past few years on school construction and implementation of UBE. Finally, the Minister wanted to speak on behalf of other developing nations to impress upon the donors the importance of their making good on their promises made at the first HLG meeting in Dakar. Administrator Natsios reiterated points made above but made clear that Nigeria will not be forgotten by the U.S. Mention was also made of the new Presidential Initiative on Basic Education, and that Nigeria is one of its first beneficiaries.

III. Meetings With Nigerian Officials

18. (SBU) Ambassador Jeter hosted a breakfast meeting and invited Dr. Babatunde Oshotimehin, Chairman, Nigerian Action Committee on AIDS and Mrs. Oby Ezekwesili, Special Advisor to the President on Budgetary Matters. Mrs. Ezekwesili stated that the budget presented by the President to the National Assembly has 45% shortfall, primarily due to reduction of resources because of decrease in OPEC allocation. Also funds were not being realized from the privatization program. Mrs. Ezekwesili explained the Nigerian budget process, provided other reasons for the shortfall, and plans to monetize civil service

benefits.

9. (SBU) HIV/AIDS ? Dr. Babatunde Oshotimehin: current national average HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is 5.6% with some states having a rate as high as 15%. The aids budget is 20-30% of Ministry of Health's total budget. Nigeria is participating in multi-country World Bank fund (credit scheme) to address prevention efforts and care and treatment, and assistance to people already infected. Nigeria has developed and is implementing its HIV/AIDS policy.

10. (SBU) Meetings were held with representatives of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the newly registered National Democratic Party (NDP) and five unregistered political associations awaiting registration. Former Senator Safana, PDP Deputy National Chairman said the political parties were committed to non-violent elections. The other parties echoed the same sentiment, but criticized the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) performance. On the issue of a code of conduct for politicians, some party representatives commented that enough enforcement laws have been enacted but enforcement has been lax. All parties stated that they would sign a code of conduct. However, some opposition party members claimed that violence could spring from the strong desire of unpopular incumbents to be reelected at all costs, including rigging the vote count, and using hired thugs to intimidate opponents and voters. Each party stated they would renounce violence, but admitted that violence was a possibility. One opposition party member stated that faced with the use of force by the incumbent candidates and parties, the opposition would be foolish to tie itself to a code of conduct. All groups voiced concern that large segments of the population were not able to register and they believed it was due to INEC's lack of planning and also misconduct by INEC officials and politicians. The AP and AD members felt that since PDP was the majority party, PDP elected officials had access to government resources that put other parties at a disadvantage when it came to campaigning.

11. (SBU) November 20, - meeting with President Obasanjo. After a quick overview of USAID's programs and presence in Nigeria, the Administrator raised the USG's major concerns regarding the status of the Nigerian electoral process, stressing the need for a code of conduct and the need to adequately fund INEC. The President responded positively on both issues. On the matter of the code of conduct, the National Assembly had failed to pass the anti-electoral violence bill, but he would re-submit the legislation. The President said that he had approved the entire 27 billion Naira election budget that INEC had presented to conduct the elections. The Ministry of Finance has been authorized to expedite the funds to INEC. The President promised that he would work to ensure the elections were credible and fair.

12. (SBU) November 20, 14:00 - during a meeting with INEC Chairman Guobadia, and Secretary General Baba-Ahmed, Administrator Natsios focused on voter registration, and INEC's budget and logistic preparations. INEC officials disagreed with the claims that voter registration missed up to half of the eligible voters, but did admit that there were flaws in the exercise including the theft of registrations forms. INEC said they would reopen the registration. With the approval of the election budget, INEC hoped to begin to order essential material and further its logistical planning. On the matter of additional assistance, the Secretary General presented USAID a letter outlining INEC assistance needs for the elections. INEC was supportive of a code of conduct, but said the onus was with the parties. However, INEC would encourage the process.

13. (SBU) Meeting with the National Security Advisor, Aliyu Mohammed Gusau, he believed that a code of conduct would have minimal impact since various party constitutions incorporate similar statements. He hoped INEC could accelerate its logistical planning and acquisition of needed electoral materials. On the question of violence and the impact on a visit by the U.S. President, he was confident that there would be no reason for the President not to come.

14. (SBU) Meeting with PDP Board of Trustee Chairman and Former Vice President, Alex Ekwueme. Mr. Alex Ekwueme was mildly supportive of a code of conduct, as it was only as good as the commitment of those who signed it. He believed the key to reducing political tension and the potential for violence was to convince unpopular incumbents not to seek re-election. When asked if he planned to contest, he answered, "he had not made up his mind." (Note: since the meeting, Mr. Ekwueme has declared himself to be a candidate for President on the PDP ticket. End note).

15. (SBU) Meeting with PDP hopeful Senator Nwachukwu. Senator Nwachukwu blamed the violence on the determination of incumbents to succeed themselves. He was non-committal on a public signing of a code of conduct and suggested that the USG could be most helpful by ensuring sufficient numbers of international election monitors during the caucus and elections.

16. (SBU) In a meeting with former President Yakubu Gowon, Administrator Natsios asked about the performance of INEC. The former President cited the experience of family members' inability to register during the September voter registration exercise due to lack of materials. On the issue of a code of conduct, he responded that the most important thing is for government and politicians to play by the rules.

17. (U) Meeting with USAID partners: Pastor James Wuye and Imam Mohammed Nuralyn Ashafa, of the Muslim/Christian Dialogue Forum. The meeting, held at USAID, centered on how the two began working together, their religious background, and a description of conflict prevention activities they are actively engaged in now. The Administrator provided information on conflict activities that USAID is implementing in Europe and in Africa. He said that the mission should take a look at the Bosnia and South Africa Sesame Street activities to determine if these kinds of programs might be modified for use in Nigeria. The Administrator said that the mission should work closely with the Agency's Conflict office to: (1) design an activity that would allow us to air a weekly radio program hosted by the Pastor and the Imam; (2) do a case study on the Pastor and Imam because he believed that the lessons learned would be useful to other missions in conflict areas and (3) locate a school where the Pastor and Imam could upgrade their conflict/peace building skills. Following the meeting, the Administrator stressed that this had been one of his best meetings in Nigeria because he had the opportunity to meet ordinary people who were trying to bring peace to their country.

18. (U) During dinner discussions the USDH staff Administrator Natsios was advised that USAID/Nigeria had received funding for three (3) GDA activities. The Administrator asked whether the GDA manual was useful in designing activities. The response was while it was useful in clarifying some issues, the mission still needed more guidance from USAID/W on the contractual and legal aspects of implementing the program. A list of the issues not covered in the manual will be sent to USAID/W for possible inclusion into the GDA manual. Another topic discussed was the leveraging funds from the Nigerian diaspora. Leveraging of funds is currently being done in the E&E bureau and within the Asian community.

19. (U) At the same dinner meeting, Ambassador Jeter informed Administrator Natsios that he believed that the mission needs to bring in additional help for the elections. He said that a "domestic monitor" expert is needed for about a month to work with our international partners and other donors to get this process on track. The ambassador also said that there is a need to bring in someone with "elections" skills who could dedicate 100% of his or her time to working on the elections with the donors and INEC. The Administrator informed Ambassador Jeter that USAID would consider such a request and explore ways to be responsive. USAID will ascertain from Ambassador Jeter specifics on timing and other relevant information before contacting the Administrator. In the interim, the mission is contacting the DG center to determine the availability of USDH staff with the requisite skills, or if outside assistance must be procured.

120. (U) For your information, the embassy is drafting classified cables of the meetings held with GON officials. As soon as they are transmitted I will advise you of the date and number.
Jeter